

TESTIMONY OF HARRY VASQUEZ
BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY
IN OPPOSITION TO H.B. No. 6386 AN ACT DELAYING IMPLEMENTATION OF
LEGISLATION RAISING THE AGE OF JUVENILE JURISDICTION
AND IN SUPPORT OF EXPANSION OF FAMILY SUPPORT CENTERS

MARCH 4, 2009

Hi, my name is Harry Vasquez. I am 14 years old and I live in New Haven. I am here today to talk about Bill 6386. I am speaking against the Bill because I think it will harm me and other kids like me.

I have been living in New Haven for about 12 years now and I've been going to the Family Support Center at St. Francis Home for Children in New Haven. I grew up in one of the worst parts of New Haven. I live with my grandmother. And these past two years have been hard for me because the people that I used to hang out with always got in trouble. So my mom used to always tell me "choose your friends wisely." I ended up in court 3 times from the time I was 13 until I was 14 years old because of the friends I chose. I used to run away a lot too.

The court was going to give me 2 weeks on house arrest and one week in detention. But instead I went to the New Haven Family Support Center respite CARE program. It taught me that if I wanted to earn something, I had to do chores. It gave me a break from my friends and family for two weeks. I learned coping skills. I used to curse a lot at my mom but I learned to go into my room to cool off and then sit down and talk to her. I learned how to make better friends.

After I left respite CARE, I did Anger Replacement Therapy at the Family Support Center. I learned to think about the consequences and to walk away and let things go. I also did Boys Counsel Group where I learned how to solve problems. I also got to take a cooking class and taught everyone how to cook Spanish food.

The Family Support Center also gave me in-home therapy which gave me a bilingual therapist because grandmother only speaks Spanish. This was in my home three times a week for five months. It taught me to sit down with my mom and communicate, so now we sit down and talk more. And if I want to do something like go to the mall, now I sit down with my grandmother and ask her ahead of time what I have to do to earn that.

I used to get angry quickly and I don't anymore. I'm doing better in school, and now that I do better in school, my teachers actually want to refer me to a good high school. I get along with my grandmother better. Since I came to the Family Support Center six months ago, I haven't been arrested either. Without the Family Support Center, I would probably still be on house arrest, probably taken by DCF, and this would have affected my school.